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BALLET TODAY

Vol. I. No. 11 May-June, 1948

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

NEXT month we shall be welcoming back to London two of the great dancers of the days before the war. There is another ballerina we all long to see again (or for the first time), but so far there is no news of her return. In order to give ballet lovers a glimpse of the quality of Alexandra Danilova, last of the great Leningrad ballerinas outside Russia, pages 16 and 17 are devoted to some photographs of her in characteristic roles.

The Opera House, Covent Garden, is to have a visiting company when Sadler's Wells take their well-earned holiday. The Marquis de Cuevas' Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo will appear there from August 2nd to August 28th. The company is headed by Rosella Hightower (in the opinion of many the most brilliant of the present American ballerinas and recently a Paris sensation) and André Eglevsky, and includes George Skibine, Youly Algaroff, Olga Adabache, Gérard Mulys and Ethery Pagaya. Those who were present at the première of Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées at the Adelphi Theatre in 1946 will remember how this adorable child (she was then only thirteen), fell to the floor from Roland Petit's shoulders and broke her arm at the beginning of *Les Forains* and went through the whole ballet with it hanging limp—one of the most striking examples of the kind of courage which all ballet dancers seem to possess where their art is concerned.

It seems that the visit of Sadler's Wells Ballet to New York will only be postponed a few months and that they will appear at the Metropolitan Opera House next spring. A reciprocal visit of Ballet Theatre to Covent Garden later in the year is a strong possibility which will be greatly hoped for.

On April 1st, significant date, I attended, on the invitation of the two young ladies concerned, a dance recital at the Rudolf Steiner Hall. The performance might perhaps have been tolerated by an audience of indulgent relatives, but there was neither justification for charging admission to a public which I am glad to say was sparse, nor for wasting the time of critics who have enough to do keeping up with legitimate dance activities.

P.W.M.

A Message from Anton Dolin

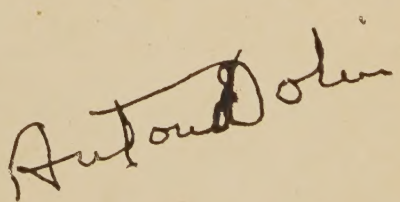
With what eager anticipation I am looking forward to my return to London! That, after nine years, it is to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and as guest artist with the Sadler's Wells Ballet, makes this event for me even happier.

I danced in 1929 at this famed Opera House for the last, alas, Diaghilev Ballet season. In 1939 I made my last appearance in London there, before the War, with my darling Irina Baronova . . . now, I hear, starring and successfully so in the play *Dark Eyes*. Now, nearly ten years later, I come back again with Alicia Markova. For several years we have had offers to return to London but not until last summer, when we were dancing in Mexico City and were extended an offer by Miss de Valois and David Webster to dance this year in London with the famed Sadler's Wells Ballet did we accept.

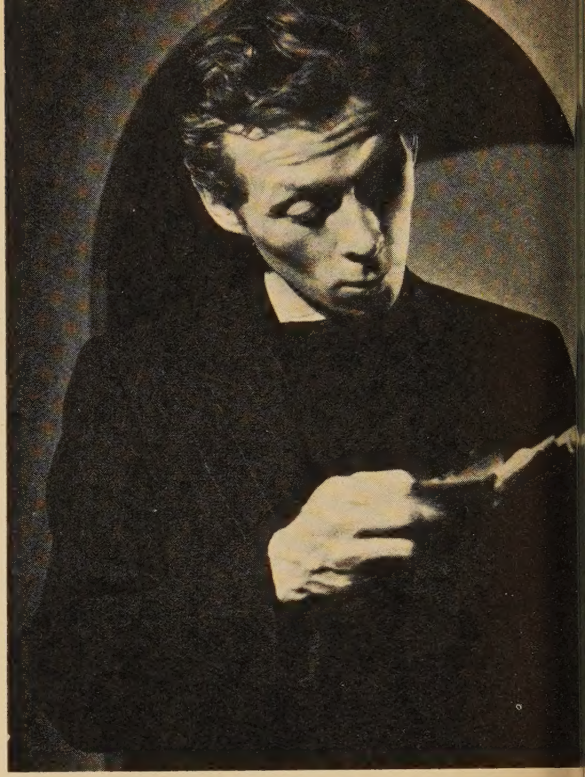
On both sides of the vast Atlantic Ocean during these nine years much has been accomplished in the difficult field of the Ballet. Here, together with Tudor, de Mille and others, we formed the Ballet Theatre. From it have risen big names in Dance . . . Nora Kaye, Alicia Alonso, John Kriza, Janet Reed, Barbara Fallis, Harold Lang, Jerome Robbins . . . all unknown until a few years ago.

It has been exciting to read here of the tremendous success and progress in England of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, of Margot Fonteyn, of Bobby Helpmann, Shearer, Grey, Turner, Somes, and *so* many others. To see them again and watch them dance is but one of the eager anticipations that await me.

I remember the beginning of the then Vic-Wells Ballet . . . the almost heartbreaking work it was in the early days. Now, after the magnificent accomplishment of Ninette de Valois has found its goal, New York waits with the same impatience and excitement the coming of this National Ballet of England to its City, as I await my return to its Capital . . . London ! *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Princess*, and de Valois' great ballet *Job*, in which I shall once again dance the role of Satan, a role she rehearsed and choreographed for me in the days at my old Studio and home in Glebe Place in London in 1930. As Ninette de Valois wrote to me then . . . "What you can do in three days is a miracle," so I can write that what she has accomplished in these years too is a miracle. And one that I hope will be soon shown to the U.S.A.



WORD FROM AUSTRALIA



Photograph by Duncan Melvin

WALTER GORE, CHOREOGRAPHER AND PREMIER DANSEU OF BALLET RAMBERT SENDS THIS REPORT OF THEIR TOU

Dear P.W.

One has to say straight away that there are no kangaroos roaming the streets or pulling carts in Australian cities: one does not get off one's ship and wade through the sea to come face to face with hordes of warlike Aborigines yelling on the beach: not at all. One does not live in a mud or stick hut and neither is one enclosed behind a stockade. Most important of all, the people here do not, and I can personally vouch for it, they positively do not walk on the ceiling, or upside down, or in any way that can possibly be called unusual. They have all the expected and accepted forms of travel impedimenta such as we have in our own great city of London, to wit, traffic lights, traffic jams, jay walkers, taxis, buses, trams, underground and surface trains, horses and of course the ubiquitous aeroplane. They have well planned harbours and quays, quite firm and solid to the foot to receive you at the end of your long journey across the oceans. I might add they also have Customs Officials.

I said earlier that one doesn't live in a mud hut and I meant exactly that. On the contrary, one revels in the comforts of a fourteen storey hotel, if one is rich enough, complete with all the luxurious chromium trappings considered in Europe and America to be so vital to living. As for the stockade business—you are free to wander without let or hindrance as far afield as you please. Of course the farther afield you wander the more likely you are to run into a snake or two, to say nothing of the various kinds of biting spider, but then one doesn't wander that far. The Zoo takes care of that craving to see nature in the raw, and there one can meet the lovely chubby Koala bears, white ones as well as brown ones, sitting up in their own special trees, or you can ogle from a safe distance the sinister Grey Nurse. Don't get the wrong impression; this Grey Nurse is a shark. If these are not enough, you can see the strange and unbelievable Platypus in its Platypussery, and the deadly little Australian Taipan snake. I am told they have a snake in this country which just loves to secrete itself in wood-piles and then jump out at anyone who is passing. What a sense of humour!

This Zoo is set amongst the most beautiful surroundings, high up above the Norwegian-like harbour, with every kind of flower imaginable laid out by green lawns and pathways. You will see many flowers here which are familiar to the English countryside: the daisy, the rose, the larkspur, snapdragon, violet and even the snowdrop, to mention only a few at random, but there are others of which you may only have heard. The beautiful white and yellow, and white and pink frangipanni with its thick, sweet scent: the vivid blue gentian, scarlet hibiscus, white syringa, and those of you who know France will mistake wattle for mimosa. Not only here will you find these flowers but in everyone's garden, and above them all rises the smell of the blue gum which you will soon get to know and like. You will also soon cease to be surprised at meeting a cat looking over the fence at you by night, only it won't be a cat it will be an opossum. You'll hear the kookaburra laughing too, and once you've seen one you'll laugh as well, for they are the funniest looking birds. They sit there on the stump of a tree or a gate by the roadside, with their big eyes wide open, looking solemn and slightly ridiculous, but you'll love them. I didn't know, so perhaps you don't either, that the kookaburra and the laughing jackass are one and the same thing. I always thought the jackass was a hyena kind of beast, but it isn't. It's this comic bird with the big round eyes who sits and sits staring into space, then goes off into peals of laughter. Being pretty good at catching snakes he is not allowed to be harmed. As if anyone could harm such a humorist.

How would you like to have a snake about the place instead of a cat to keep down the rats? Well, that is what they do in the warehouses here. They let loose

mond snakes quite nonchalantly and everybody goes
ut their business as usual.
Tough people, these Australians; but the way they
into a sea that is infested with sharks beats me, and
y call it pleasure! Off they go into the warm
ters, swimming and surfing until the alarm bell goes.
en out they come while the Life Savers dash off in
ir surf boats to scare away the sharks, but within a
minutes everybody is back in the water again.
course they have shark-proof netting at some of the
ches, but at Bondi and Manly for instance, I think
bathers get more exercise running in and out of
sea than they get from actual swimming. Several
the company have been surfing, even Rambert has
she loved it, but it's me for the Pool every time,
nk you very much. Twelve feet of shark is just
ut twelve feet more than I care for, and they swim
whole lot faster than I can. They have so many
re teeth, too.
The main difference between English and Australian
ather is that when the sun shines here it is very much
tter, and when it rains it is not only much wetter
much more penetrating. Otherwise there is not
ch difference. It rains when you think it is going to
hot, and it's sweltering hot when you think it is going
rain. Just now there is a full flood running down the
ters and it has only been raining three minutes. Later
ight I expect we shall not be able to sleep because
the heat and mosquitoes. On the other hand it may
cold enough to call for blankets, so you see how it is.
All this really has no bearing on what you wanted to
ow, which was, how we were received in Melbourne,
t I felt I had to introduce you to the Australian scene
st, if only very perfunctorily, so having done that
begin quite simply by saying I like this City of
lbourne. It is clean and quiet, except at rush
urs, and then Flinders Street is the last place in the
rld to be. It has the reputation of being the busiest
lway station in the world, and I can well believe it.
ey have many English place names here and it gives one
her a startling jolt to hear someone say they are off to
ddington or Oxford Street, to say nothing of Charing
oss, but don't let that make you think these places
like England. They are quite Australian, which
as it should be. I was saying this city is clean, and
is too, also it is well laid out. The streets are
odelled on the American style, that is to say they
ersect at angles of ninety degrees and run straight
ross the city. They tell you here with great pride
at Melbourne learned from the mistakes of Sydney,
ose streets followed, and grew up round, the bullock
d sheep tracks of the pioneer days, and this would
pear to be so, for they wind about quite like our
ndon streets, though ours, I think, did not grow out
sheep tracks. Sydney in its turn, for there is a
endly inter-city rivalry, will pooh-pooh the Melbourne

Photograph by Duncan Melvin
SALLY GILMOUR AS THE BALLERINA FROM PARIS IN "GALA PERFORMANCE"

PAULA HINTON AS THE MILKMAID IN "FACADE" WITH WALTER GORE AND DAVID ELLIS
Action Photograph by Duncan Melvin

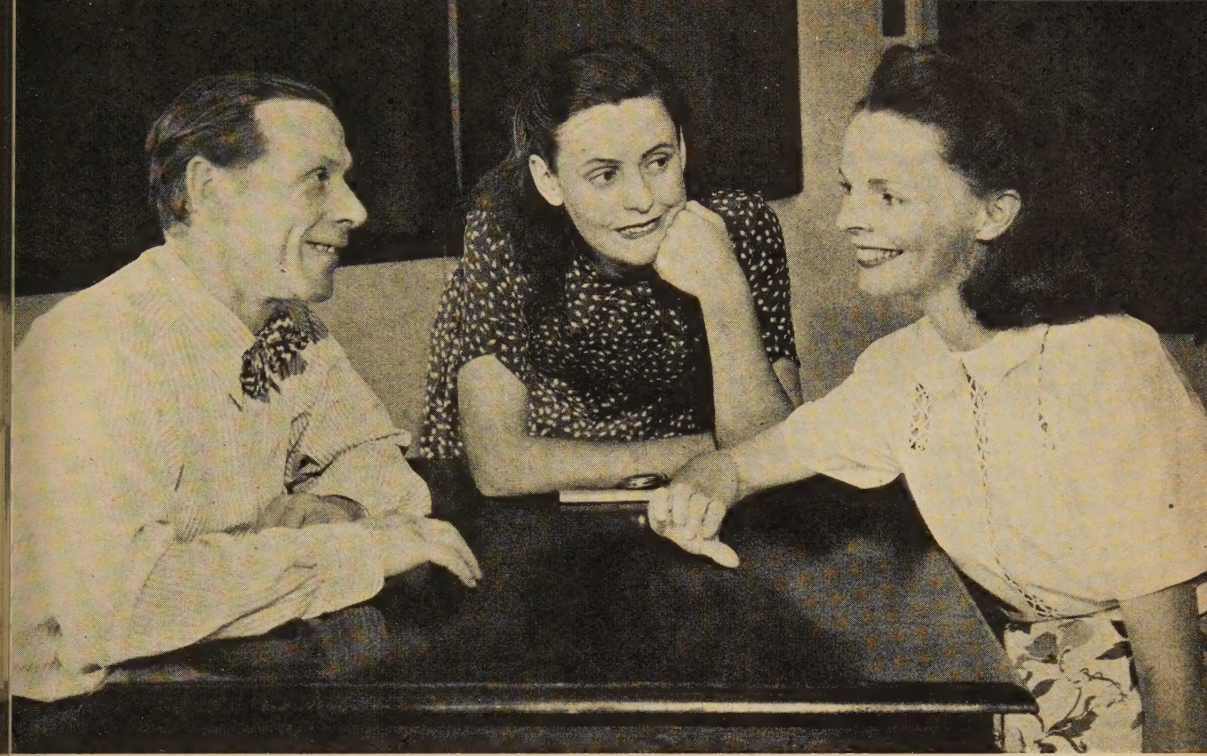
weather, but for my part I like the inconsistency of it and find the air good and dry, although it can get very hot especially when that North Wind blows. My word, but that's a hot wind! It gets in your eyes despite sun glasses, making them water and sting, and it burns your nostrils and throat. It is like nothing so much as standing in front of an open oven door. Actually we were not sorry to meet it for the first once or twice as it was quite cold when we arrived in Melbourne and we actually shivered as we climbed into our practice clothes, but that only lasted a week or two and then after fifteen minutes at the barre we were leaving pools of sweat on the floor and gasping for breath, for the heat of the air made it difficult to breathe. Talk about flame swallowers at the fair! You may believe we ran for the nearest milk bar at the earliest opportunity.

It is quite an experience to dance with the temperature at a hundred and fourteen, which we have done many times. It helps to loosen the muscles quickly of course, but it does feel uncomfortable to dance in a costume that gets soaking wet before you have even put it on.

Here is another unusual experience. The Lord Mayor gave a party for us after a show one night, and it was held in the Aquarium! There, amongst these odd creatures of the deep, cuttle-fish, angel-fish, turtles, sea-horses (which I think are the most unbelievable of all fish), and myriads of tiny iridescent sparkling colours which could hardly be called fish at all, all topped off by the newly-arrived octopus, and amongst this strange world we walked, talked and dined. It was most peculiar to see these queer faces looking at us from behind the glass and blowing bubbles at us as we examined them with a fish pasty in our hand. Tactless and provoking, I always say, to eat fish in front of a fish. I think the octopus took offence, for he died a few days later. Someone said Joyce had frightened it to death by copying its movements, but actually it died because it was very young and didn't take kindly to captivity. It was a most unusual evening, very like being a guest of Captain Nemo, and only one instance of the many kind hearts of the Melbourne people. Invitation followed invitation, for weekends in the mountains, Sundays by the sea, or motor-trips through the surrounding country. One man wanted to take the whole company some hundred miles out into the Bush, to see a big sheep station, but that did not materialise because of transport difficulties.

Ever since we arrived in Australia we have been looked after as if we belonged here. As soon as we set foot on land at Sydney Harbour, we were welcomed with big smiles and boxes of chocolates. Borovansky gave a reception in our honour at the Hotel Australia and made us welcome. He made a short speech and told us how pleased he was to see us here, and assured us we would have a great success. Then bouquets were handed to the members of our company, together with a set of book ends for Rambert, carved in the shape of kangaroos, which she proudly carried round the room showing them to everybody and calling them wallabies. This raised quite a laugh as your Australian knows the difference between a kangaroo and a wallaby. We didn't. Rambert then stood up and made a very happy speech and the afternoon ended in great handshaking and good wishes for our tour. We hadn't time to stay and see their performance at the Theatre Royal as we had to catch the train to Melbourne, but we did wish we could have done so, for they were dancing *Terra Australis* that night I believe, and as this is a truly Australian ballet it would have been interesting to see. There were many people at the station to see us off, including Charles Boyd. This was indeed a happy reunion for it was about nine years since we had met. He didn't look any different at all, and at once we began to chatter about old times. "Do you remember So-and-so, and is So-and-so still dancing?" It brought back those far-off days of the early performances of *Lady into Fox*, and soon all those who remembered him were asking if he was joining us again. He smiled as if to say he would like to but . . . Within a few months he had not only rejoined us but had danced *Fox* as well, and now I hope he is with us for good, if he can be persuaded to leave this land of milk and honey.

Arrived in Melbourne, we were met by a battery of press photographers and the contents of half-a-dozen flower shops. We were photographed eating chocolates, sitting on suitcases, leaping in the air and doing everything they could think of. Following this there were receptions for the Press to meet us officially, for the different Societies and important people to meet us, and hundreds of other receptions organised in our honour. For the first few weeks during the rehearsal period we lived in a whirl of rehearsals and receptions, and didn't know whether it was Friday or Christmas, especially being on the other side of the world where summer *is* Christmas anyway. Gradually we got used to it and took it all in our stride, but it never became any less exciting or pleasant. Sally opened exhibitions, gave prizes at dog shows, spoke as Guest of Honour at meetings. Rambert, too, was here, there and everywhere in great demand, and then there were the broadcasts. Rambert, Sally, Frank, John and myself all spoke over the air many times and thoroughly enjoyed it. I must admit that after we had begun to dance at night we had to draw a line. Not a very thick red line, but a faint, thin pencil line as it were, because we just couldn't keep pace with it all. Everyone seemed to vie one with the other in giving us a good time. It was all genuine too. They all wanted to know about London, and how it was during the war, and whether it really was true that we got as little food and clothing as the papers said. This was not out of



Photograph by The Greegan Studios

SALLY GILMOUR AND WALTER GORE BROADCASTING FROM MELBOURNE

sbelief, but out of friendship because it distressed em to think of us, part of one big family, as one oman put it, to whom the world owed such a tre-endous debt and who now had so very little. I verheard one man on a tram say that he would do ithout sugar and butter altogether if he thought it ould get to England and go to the people who needed .' They plied us with questions as to what was the st sort of thing to send; was there anyone we would ke parcels sent to ; how long were we going to stay Australia and what ballets were we going to dance. hey seemed surprised when we said we were not ancing *Coq d'Or*, *Firebird*, *Igor* and the like, and could ot imagine what we would do if not those. It was uite understandable as they had been more or less rought up on the Russian ballet companies and had nly "heard of course of your English ballets, *Lady into ox* and (surprisingly) *Simple Symphony*," but they xpected big, spectacular things in the old Russian yle and were rather at a loss to describe to themselves ist what they were going to see. They were re-eved to know we would dance *Giselle* and *Swan Lake*, r these were something they could put their finger on, ut as for the rest, I think they rather thought it ouldn't be what they expected: though any doubts e may have had about the way they would receive us ere dispelled five minutes after the curtain went up r the first time, and when it came down for the wenty-fourth and last time on that memorable first night we knew we had made a hit and that they liked us.

That was a wonderful feeling indeed. What a night! You should have seen the flowers! There must have been over sixty bouquets laid out across the stage, surmounted by a gigantic eight foot flower horseshoe for Rambert. She could hardly make her speech of thanks through crying with joy and excitement.

As programme succeeded programme we saw with delight that they were able to appreciate the subtleties of our work as well as the more obvious parts, and their enthusiasm became very real and permanent. Not only the public, but the stage hands too were most enthusiastic and complimented us by watching the ballets through night after night, laughing at the humour or becoming completely absorbed in the drama of them. This was a triumph indeed, for they are not what you would usually call ballet fans. But they were more than that, they were friends, and on the last night the audience really let themselves go. They cheered and stamped and threw coloured paper streamers on to the stage from the gallery, circle, stalls and boxes. The auditorium was joined to the stage by hundreds of coloured ribbons as it were, and our conductor was brushing them off his head, and those which fell into the orchestra were picked up by the musicians and thrown up at us. Rambert made a speech, and Sally had to make one too and I believe there were even more flowers than on the first night. I lost count of the curtains. I felt like one of those Chinese dolls

which perpetually nod their heads. Up and down, up and down. I wish you could have been there.

The fact that we were entertained so royally on every hand is quite beside the point, and was only partly responsible for our liking Melbourne and its people. The most important thing by far, and the most satisfying, was to know that we, the first English ballet company to visit Australia, have acquitted ourselves of this high honour with great credit and come through with colours flying. We all had great personal success, especially Sally, and our ballets had been taken with great gusto and a clamouring for more and yet more. We had shown what English Ballet had been doing since the great days of Diaghilev, and Melbourne had responded by asking us to come back again soon.

I can only say to this city full of friends that we would love to return at any time because of your warm hearts, your love of ballet, and our great enjoyment at dancing for you. Let us hope the boomerangs you gave us will really bring us back again.

Give my love to London.

Sally

P.S. We have just made a smash hit opening in Sydney.

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

ANNETTE CHAPPELL AND JOHN GILPIN IN THE "GISELLE" PAS DE DEUX

TWO NEW BALLETS

By JASPER HOWLETT

TWO ballets of considerable interest, both by overseas choreographers, have appeared recently, but the théatre shortage has given the provinces and outer London precedence over the West End in seeing them.

Dorothy Stevenson, an Australian, is choreographer of *Sea Legend*, produced by the International Ballet. A sailor, loving the sea, is fascinated by a half-mortal maiden he meets on the shore, who, longing to be wholly human, is compelled by her nature to draw him after her into the waves, where he is drowned. His body is cast up on shore, the sea maiden dances a lament for him, and the waves resume their normal, indifferent course.

The choreographer avoids the pitfalls of meaningless movement and ugly poses which strive to be original, and uses classical technique in a fresh, individual way. The flaw lies in a disparity of length, the choreographer has finished before the composer, and a drawn out ending spoils the climax.

In the solos the human vitality of Michel de Lutry as the Sailor contrasts well with Dorothy Stevenson's half human sea-woman, and the two wholly sea creatures, Siren and Shadow (Claudie Algeranova and Peter White). But the outstanding feature is the Sea itself, the *corps de ballet*. The constant ebb and flow, now violent, now almost imperceptible, the transition from group to group, convey vividly the essence of the sea, within whose framework the soloists play their drama.

The score, by Esther Rofe, with its insistent rhythms, emphasises the elemental theme, and the designer, John Bainbridge, evolves characteristic costumes against a background that fills the eye without distracting it.

Designs with Strings, produced by the Metropolitan Ballet, has choreography by John Taras (seen here with Ballet Theatre and de Basil), to a movement of a Tchaikovsky trio. The chasm between *enchaînements* and choreography is narrow but unfathomable; on one side lies the classroom, on the other *Les Présages*, *Symphonic Variations* and *Designs with Strings*.

It is a ballet of moods, swiftly changing, vibrantly responsive to the music, its designs at once meaningful

(Continued on page 30)

ion photograph by Duncan Melvin

SONIA AROVA IN "DESIGNS WITH STRINGS"

MICHEL DE LUTRY, DOROTHY STEVENSON, CLAUDIE ALGERANOVA AND PETER WHITE IN "SEA LEGEND"

tograph by Frank Sharman

AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA, PEOPLE'S ARTIST OF THE U.S.S.R.

VAGANOVA AS ODILE IN "LE LAC DES CYGNES"

PROFESSOR AGRIPPINA VAGANOVA

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

PART II

IN trying to establish the value of any new theory or system it is much more important to find out what is the difference between the new system and the old ones, rather than to look for what has remained of them in the new method.

As early as the Didelot era Russian ballet had elements purely Russian, truly national. Didelot himself, like Gonzago and many others before and after them, became Russian in spirit. In his time the Russian ballet school produced such inherently Russian ballerinas as Istomina and Maria Danilova.

With every new generation Russian ballet grew to be more indigenous. When Russian artists danced at the Paris Operas in the 'nineties, French ballet masters discovered, much to their surprise, that there already was in existence a Russian school of dancing.

And did not A. Pleshchayev write that Cecchetti, who had stayed until an advanced age on the St. Petersburg stage, "became completely changed both as a dancer and ballet master, so strong was the influence of the Russian school upon him."

By the time of the Diaghilev tours, the national character of the Russian school had become still more evident. It was futile to speak of any mechanical fusion of French or Italian elements. Russian dancers proved the presence of an original, independent Russian style of performance and therefore a school.

Vaganova started a new epoch in the Russian classical school. Her school is a Russian school in its very essence.

All the best qualities of the Russian dancer were taken into consideration when this method was being evolved, while later, when the pupil passed on to the stage, the school was enlivened by the range of quality of movement and the deeply emotional, thoughtful interpretations inseparable from the Russian artist.

It is interesting that while Vaganova has not occupied herself at all with male dancing, her method has influenced the male part of the ballet as well.

Aplomb, the most important of Vaganova's method, became a very ordinary thing in the Leningrad company. It produces lightness and ease in performance of *tours* and variations. It is *aplomb* which enables the dancer to perform many virtuoso difficulties. But the dancer who would have recourse to nothing but stunts, feeling that Vaganova's school has given the strength and poise enabling her to perform almost anything, would greatly

ieve her teacher. Vaganova supplies her pupils with e iron-sure technique merely to allow them to ecute every movement with ease so as to concentrate the artistic perfection of their parts once they are t of school.

Vaganova herself danced with the greatest taste and straint, never overdoing the technical side though e was endowed with an unparalleled *ballon* and celled in *allegro*. After Fokine saw her dance *opiniana* once, he gave her all the parts in succession the mazurka and the solo waltz, and the main waltz th a partner. That was in 1910.

In 1913 she danced *Swan Lake* for the first time. It s another triumph, in spite of the long years when e had to fight for each new part—a modest woman voted to her art, abhorring the "pulls" and intrigues the court ballet. In the second act of *Swan Lake* she placed the *fouettés*—which were of no particular terest to her—with a series of *arabesques* on a diagonal e, ranging from a small to a very high one.

She left the stage in her prime as a dancer, simply cause the time of service in the Imperial Theatres s up. A. Levinson, V. Svetlov, A. Volinsky fumed the Imperial Theatre's routine management's senseless rting with a talented dancer, but routine had its way.

The October Revolution brought new life to ganova. She was able to bring her principles to the School of Choreography and was given every chance to develop her method from the series of traits which formed an organic whole. Nicolas Legat—her untiring teacher—had also possessed the art of thinking in laconic choreographic idiom but not to the same extent. Answering the requirements of the new Soviet Ballet, Vaganova has developed a fuller use of the arms, legs, body.

The body is for Vaganova the master of the frame, but the dancer is the master of the body. She uses the term "body" because she has in mind that part of the frame in its entity, but the back of Vaganova's pupils is quite famous. It is an axiom of hers that the legs of her dancers are strong and well developed, otherwise they could not help to achieve the *aplomb*, and the same goes for the arms. But *conscious feeling* of the work of the body (dancing "out of the body" as she says) is the focal point of her entire system.

At sixty-seven, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova, Professor, Stalin Prize winner, grandmother, has not stopped growing. When I saw her last in Moscow on a visit she had just come from a rehearsal of a new ballet. What she said filled me with fresh admiration—"It is all right on the whole, but why so many old movements, the same lifts in the air? Choreographers must work; they must invent something new. We should grow."

VAGANOVA'S CLASS. REHEARSAL HALL, LENINGRAD SCHOOL OF CHOREOGRAPHY

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET IN HOLLAND

By PAULA BALMA

THE long awaited visit of the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company to Amsterdam, the Hague and Rotterdam, which took place from the 12th to the 19th March under the patronage of the Wagner Society and the British Council was an enormous success for the English company and aroused great enthusiasm amongst the Dutch public, dancers and critics. All performances took place before packed houses, and in Amsterdam an extra matinée had to be organised to satisfy the ballet lovers who could not get seats for the evening performances.

The tour began with a press conference at the British Council with Miss de Valois and Mr. Frederick Ashton, where we became acquainted with Miss de Valois' extraordinary gift for making a very sympathetic, interesting and most instructive speech. It was a surprise to learn that the company needed no rehearsals with the orchestra nor with the lighting. A first inkling of the great discipline of the ballet!

MARGOT FONTEYN WITH MASCHA TER WEEME AND MAX DOOYES OF BALLET OF THE LOWLANDS

Photograph by Particam Pictures, Amsterdam

From the literature and photographs the Dutch public had some idea what it would be going to see, but even after the first performance it was clear that the achievements of the national ballet company were far beyond expectations. Dancing in our country has been strongly influenced by the Central European dance and in the course of the years Jooss, Schoop, Kreutzberg, etc. had formed a dance-public accustomed to that kind of dancing. So it was interesting to watch how the public and critics would react to the achievements of a ballet company entirely formed according to the principles of the classic dance. But as already said, Sadler's Wells came, saw and conquered!

The general opinion is that the English dancers have developed a style of their own and that the ideal of a ballet being a unity of dancing, music and painting is taken very seriously. Of the ballets by Miss de Valois *Checkmate* made the strongest impression. The very clever choreography, the unity formed by the settings and the dancing, the dramatic conflicts and the beautiful performances of Pamela May and Beryl Grey as the Black Queen, Harold Turner as the Red Knight, as well as the well-disciplined dancing of the *corps de ballet* were highly praised.

The Rake's Progress is interesting as a typical English ballet, but in my opinion it is more pantomime than ballet. By this I mean that the different persons are characterised by their appearance and miming, and even by special movements, but not by their *dancing*. In ballets based on a theme, the dramatic operation has to be expressed by dancing and not by sequences of movements characteristic of each person. From time to time the pure dancing has to flourish out of the dramatic operation as it is otherwise not justified as a subject for ballet.

The general opinion about Helpmann's *Miracle in the Gorbals* is that its theme is too precarious for a theatrical work and especially for a ballet. From the books about Helpmann we know that as a choreographer he takes as starting point for his ballets a dramatic plot, to which in principle there is no objection if the plot is expressed by the means of dancing. This, however, is not the case ; he does not translate the moods and actions by dancing but by mimed movements of the characters and the group. Helpmann has made a very realistic drama of movement by putting the characters and their reactions to the happenings as naturalistically as possible on the stage. It is interesting to compare his work

MARGOT FONTEYN AND MICHAEL SOMES TAKING A CALL AFTER THE AURORA PAS DE DEUX AT AN AMSTERDAM PERFORMANCE

ith Jooss's *Big City*, though the latter may be called ut of time" as regards the style of dancing. But Jooss as expressed the tragedy and the different moods by ancing, without settings or plot. *Miracle in the Gorbals* ontains touching moments, for instance the coming to fe of the Suicide, the duet of the young boy and girl, ut on the other hand the work contains gestures which vere too realistic for my taste, for example those of the Official after his visit to the Prostitute, the torturing of he Stranger, etc. It was a disappointment for Dutch allet lovers that Robert Helpmann was not with the ompany, but we hope to see him on the next visit in ome of his famous roles.

The great revelation, however, for public, dancers nd critics was Frederick Ashton's *Symphonic Variations*, ballet which cannot be praised enough. I saw it for he first time during the September visit of the company o Brussels, and seeing it again was a great joy to me. Inanimously the critics have praised Ashton's work, vith the exception of one who disapproved of using ranck's music for dancing, and another one who was f the opinion that there was not enough use made of the ifference in movement for male and female dancers. n my opinion Ashton, with his *Symphonic Variations* has nade "*de la musique visible*" in the true sense of the vord and has placed himself in the first ranks of con- emporary choreographers. Mr. Ashton has proved hat beautiful dancing in perfect harmony with the music can give a high aesthetic enjoyment, and at certain moments even deep emotion. This ballet had a tremendous success at all performances and it was a great satisfaction to find that, in spite of these difficult and sorrowful times, people are sensible to such a marvellous work of art.

I shall always think of this ballet with a profound feeling of gratitude to Ashton and to the dancers who danced it so well.

Scènes de Ballet to Stravinsky's music means a further step in Ashton's development as a composer of abstract ballet. This ballet, which partly owing to Stravinsky's music, is more difficult to understand, has great merits. It contains many choreographic findings, the use of special combinations, and gives again a proof of the choreographer's great musicality and feeling for the use of the classical dance ; but one would have to see this ballet more than once to have an exact judgment.

Another highlight for me was Margot Fonteyn's dancing in the Aurora *pas de deux* partnered by Michael Somes. The way in which she appeared on the stage revived the famous past ; her dancing has great style, *noblesse* and charm. Pamela May, Moira Shearer and Beryl Grey possess great qualities and were highly praised in the press.

Taking into consideration that the art of ballet in England is only about twenty years old, the standard already reached is very high, and this applies also as

regards the *corps de ballet*. When I saw the company for the first time in Brussels I felt rather disappointed by the male dancing, (having just seen Kalioujny, Eglevsky and others in France), but it seems to me that several promising young male dancers are now in the *corps de ballet*. Though Michael Somes, Harold Turner and Alexis Rassine have each their special qualities, the company lacks a *premier danseur* in the great classical style. I mean that what is achieved with the female dancers has not yet been attained with the male dancers. The quality of the female dancers is several degrees higher than that of the male dancers.

The artistic level of the company is beyond all praise. Under the inspiring direction of Ninette de Valois a first class ballet company with a distinguished English style has been built up in a very short time.

At several receptions we had the pleasure of meeting the dancers and we are all very enthusiastic about their charm and simplicity, their interest and love for their art. Notwithstanding that her time was very limited, Miss de Valois was so kind as to talk about various interesting matters at the International Cultural Centre. It was very useful for the audience (mostly dancers, musicians and critics), to hear from Miss de Valois personally how important the classical technique is as a basis for all forms of dancing. Strange as it may seem to English readers, there are still struggles in our country as regards the controversy between "classical" and "modern" dancing, though most of the dancers are by now convinced that the classical technique cannot be dismissed.

Mr. Ashton visited a rehearsal of the Dutch group, Ballet of the Lowlands, and he gave the young Dutch choreographer, Max Dooyes, whom he thinks very talented, much good advice. Of the Dutch dancers he said he was of the opinion that they are very expressive but that the average standard of the technique needs to be raised. I wonder whether in England a ballet-master could be found willing to work for some time with the Dutch dancers.

The visit of the Sadler's Wells Company to Holland has been very inspiring for the dancers, and I hope that the contacts made between English and Dutch dancers can be kept alive, as in every respect we can take the British achievement as an example for the development of ballet in our country.

The action photograph by Fred Fehl, New York, on the cover is of Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin in "Giselle." They will be dancing this ballet next month at Covent Garden.

MARGOT FONTEYN AND MICHAEL SOMES IN "LE LAC DES CYGNES," ACT III

Action photograph by Edward Mandinian

SWAN LAKE REVIVIFIED

By MARY CLARKE

SADLER'S WELLS have several times instituted minor alterations in their production of *Le Lac des Cygnes* over the past twelve years, removing and reinstating traditional dances, switching the *pas de trois* from act to act and entirely redecorating the ballet, yet without altering the general presentation one iota : one always knew exactly how it would be danced. The most exciting aspect of the revival at Covent Garden on April 13th then, was the discovery that the choreography had been really worked over and reconsidered so that the great *adagios* now display in full measure the mature capabilities of both ballerina and *danseur*. Quantities of tiny emendations, expertly rehearsed and mastered, resulted in a revitalised performance from both Fonteyn and Somes. The unearthly pallor of Fonteyn's new Act II make-up characterised the greater depth of tragedy which she now finds in the Swan Queen. Her technical accomplishment seems to allow her infinities of time in which to develop the finest shades of meaning from every gesture, every movement, and the alliance, indeed the *absorption* of this expressiveness to the lovely classicism of her dancing makes her now an almost ideal exponent of this most romantic of all classic ballets. Her Odile gains in flash and pace from the alterations in the choreography (would that she could also gain in pace occasionally from the lethargic orchestra !) and if she lacks real diamond brilliance, well, there is more than one way of pointing the contrast between the two characters. The merit of Somes, as the Prince, lies in his realisation that if a *pas de deux* is to be more than just a technical exercise the ballerina's partner must be more than just a support ; he accordingly contributes character, faultless partnering and some fine dancing.

The performances of these two dancers would carry almost any production of *Le Lac des Cygnes*. In the present one, they succeeded in making me forget the unsuitable décor, although nothing could distract from the ill-assorted mélange of colour which the new costumes underline in Act I. Class distinctions, incidentally, are now quite unfathomable among the boys : it seems as if peasants are characterised by velveteen and nobles by homespun, but the new peasant boys certainly dance better than the "Prince's friends" used to. The enlarged *corps de ballet* is not yet as well rehearsed as the principals but most soloists dance well and, with its return to Act I where it is nicely incorporated, the *pas de trois* has become less of a breakneck *tour de force*.

The performance given by Beryl Grey and John Hart on April 16th also reflected a new approach. It was less successful, chiefly because it was far less balanced : Beryl Grey is well able to *dance* the double role but she cannot be expected to develop the character completely while she has to do it alone. John Hart is a very efficient support but as the Prince in *Le Lac des Cygnes* he is nothing more. He is endowed with neither a naturally regal air not the power to assume one and, surprising though it may be in the face of his achievements in *The Three-Cornered Hat* and *Mam'zelle Angot*, his mime is so meaningless as to be almost funny. This lack of support probably accounts for Beryl Grey's tendency to become rather over-emotional at times. It is an excellent idea to suggest in the Act II solo that Odette has now fallen in love, but something must be held in reserve for Act IV.

And now, may we not have an equally careful reassessment of the other classics in the repertoire ? *Coppélia* and *Giselle* are flagrant cases of productions that are saved only by exceptional dancing and the former is very rarely saved at all these days. Beryl Grey demonstrated in March that she has been devoting a lot of thought and care to her interpretation of *Giselle* which has now improved immensely. She has always danced it with a careful exactitude but now it begins to mean something. She was hampered, however, in this as in so many of her major roles, by an inferior partner : Rassine as Albrecht is neither a reliable support nor a dramatic foil for his ballerina.

It is cheering to find that *Scènes de Ballet* is winning a steadily increasing public. The dancers (particularly Fonteyn) seem much happier about the ballet and consequently display its beautiful choreography more clearly. And if the audience evinces an esteem for the ballet, the management (who knows?) may one day decide that it is worthy of redecorating.

METROPOLITAN BALLET

Metropolitan Ballet will have their first London season when they come to the Scala on June 2nd for two and a half weeks. This is not by any means an ideal theatre for ballet but the difficulties in obtaining West End theatres seem to become more and more insurmountable, and the directors feel that with the experience of nearly two years of successful touring behind them the Company is ready to show its repertoire of new ballets in the metropolis. Frank Staff's *Lovers' Gallery* and *Designs with Strings* by John Taras have been particularly successful and the recent revival of Fokine's *Dances from "Prince Igor"* has created great interest during the present tour. The company which will appear in London includes Sonia Arova, Celia Franca, Svetlana Beriosova, Frank Staff, Eric Bruhn and Nicolas Beriosoff, who is also *régisseur*.

Photograph by Moss Photo, N.Y

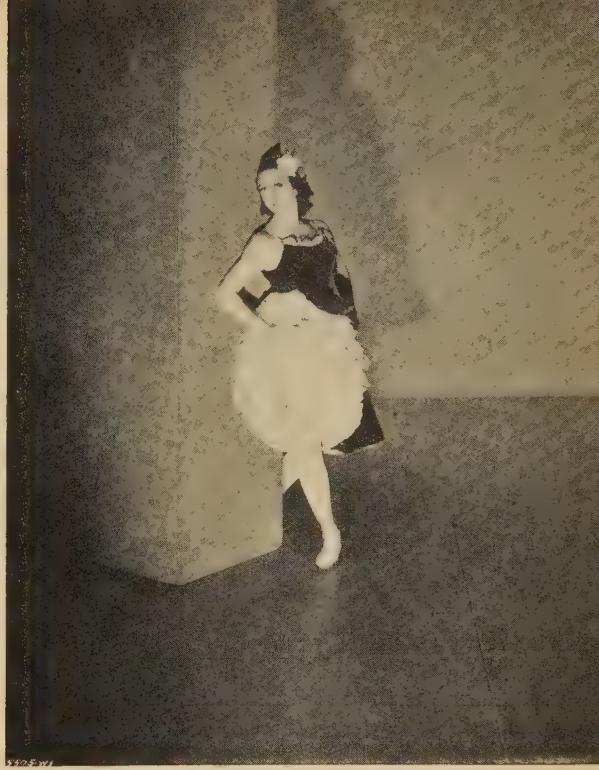
ONE OF DANILOVA'S FAVOURITE PORTRAITS

IN THE TITLE ROLE OF "RAYMONDA" WITH NICOLAS MAGALLANES

ALEXANDRA DANILO

Photograph by Mel-Art Photo

IN HER DRESSING ROOM



otograph by Dwight Godwin

S THE GLOVE SELLER IN "GAITÉ PARISIENNE" WITH MASSINE

AS THE STREET DANCER IN "LE BEAU DANUBE"

BALLERINA

ction photograph by Fred Fehl

AS SWANILDA IN "COPPÉLIA" WITH FREDERIC FRANKLIN

THE SEASON IN NEW YORK

By MURRAY N. FRIEDMAN

IT is with mixed reactions that I report on the state of the ballet season in New York thus far. In a sense, an absence of several months from the American ballet scene has been valuable in that it has enabled me to get a fresh view of the companies and to observe more clearly their progress or retrogression. On the other hand, when one has long looked forward to seeing his familiar ballets and dancers, and when time has dimmed the things that used to annoy one, one is apt to be, perhaps, abnormally critical and fussy.

With this warning I must state at the outset that the sojourn just completed of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo has been a severe disappointment to me. There were bright spots here and there to be sure, but I was appalled at the sloppiness of many of the productions, lackadaisical performances, obvious miscastings, and most of all, at the lack of insistence on standards. To put it bluntly, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo is in sad need of pulling itself up short and devoting some time to the re-working of many of the ballets in its repertoire. It is a first-rate company technically speaking, and the *corps de ballet* is still excellent, but unless some stern artistic direction is forthcoming soon it is in danger of losing the reputation it has worked so hard to build.

The season opened at the New York City Center on February 15th. *Les Sylphides* was the curtain-raiser and my re-introduction to the group. It was a poor performance. The music was taken too quickly and not one of the solos was done to any entire satisfaction. Never did one feel the magic that the ballet must possess. There was no fluidity or grace ; rather, one got the feeling of a series of classroom exercises, sometimes well, sometimes indifferently performed. Tatiana Grantzeva in the Valse and Edwina Seaver in the Prelude were competent and not much more. Frank Hobi, making his New York debut as the man, was stiff and uncomfortable, and Nathalie Krassovska in the Mazurka and *Pas de deux* was not up to her best form. Mr. Hobi is a young man of promising ability. I have seen him often and know that he can and will do better. Perhaps he needs another year of seasoning before he can handle leading roles.

Concerto Barocco, Balanchine's ballet to the music of the Bach Double Concerto in D Minor, came next. Here again the music appeared to have been taken too fast and the performance was far too mechanical. It might not be a bad idea for Mr. Balanchine to return and take the dancers in hand. I can just imagine the present theory of interpretation :—It's Balanchine ; it's intellectual ; therefore feeling is of little importance, one can concentrate on the technique. Technically it was quite good. Mary Ellen Moylan, replacing Marie Jeanne, is a fine dancer, clean and precise in her work. Patricia Wilde and Luis Trapaga also were capable executors, as was the *corps de ballet*. I missed Nicolas Magallanes particularly. Mr. Trapaga does not show the latter's ease and grace of movement. Ballet Russe could ill afford to lose Magallanes.

Ruthanna Boris and Leon Danielian, assisted by Frank Hobi and Patricia Wilde, next gave Miss Boris's *Cirque de Deux*. It is a delightful spoof of ballet presented in circus terms. Danielian was never in better form. His elevation was a joy to behold and his partnering excellent, while Miss Boris was a fine counterfoil. This ballet is already familiar to the readers of *Ballet Today*. My only regret is that it is a trifle too long. The jest begins to lose flavour as a result, but it is not a grievous fault.

Gaité Parisienne concluded the programme. It makes a fine closing ballet but it needs a lot of working on if it is to recapture its place in the affections of ballet lovers. The performance on the whole was very loose indeed. Alexandra Danilova made her first entrance of the evening as the Glove Seller and the usual spontaneous and vociferous ovation greeted her. There is surely no more beloved ballerina on the American dance stage today. Frederic Franklin as the Baron, Danielian as the Peruvian and Stanley Zympakos as the Officer were individually very commendable and Gertrude Tyven properly breathtaking as the leading can-can dancer.

The succeeding nights showed a succession of some of the old stand-bys and some fairly new things. *Swan Lake*, *Schéhérazade*, *Nutcracker*, *Coppélia*, *Raymonda* and *Rodeo* were not too bad. *Frankie and Johnny* is now played very largely as farce and is a little painful. In the search for laughs a good deal of over-playing is manifest and the humour becomes far too broad. Nikita Talin as the Bartender is still giving a performance which shows artistry and inspiration, however. *Madronos*, by Antonia Cobos, is a dreadful bore. As for *Lola Montez*, the creation of the gifted Edward Caton, I simply cannot understand how it ever got into the repertoire. It is a "turkey," and the audience would have none of it.

So the season progressed until the long-awaited première of *Giselle*. This was re-staged by Frederic Franklin after Sergueff's version. I found it disappointing, but the good was so mixed with the bad that it is difficult to put one's finger precisely on the weak points. The entire production lacked something.

RUTHANNA BORIS AND FREDERIC FRANKLIN IN "BILLY SUNDAY"

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA IN "GISELLE", ACT I

he sets, after Benois, said to be those used by Diaghilev, eemed tawdry and the costumes were nothing to cheer bout. No one expected Madame Danilova to do onders as a young and artless maiden, but even so, he first act seemed like a travesty. The direction was oor and the mime even poorer. The second act was hore satisfactory. Danilova recaptured her audience, hile Franklin, as Albrecht, was able to employ his thleticism to better advantage. Mary Ellen Moylan icked authority as Queen of the Wilis. I had the eeling, however, that as the company worked into he ballet many of the difficulties would be ironed out ; ut Franklin suffered an injury soon after and the ballet as removed from the programmes. Let us hope that ext season this company will make a real addition to he repertoire with its *Giselle*.

There is not much more to tell of the engagement. *illy Sunday*, choreographed by Ruth Page, was a dismal ailure. Erotic, poorly conceived and unimaginatively resented, it failed to win acceptance even after it was leaned up at the request of church groups. Danilova id all that could be expected of her, as did Franklin, ut they could not save the ballet. The need for new allets has not been alleviated by this contribution.

A word in conclusion about the rise in the company of obert Lindgren and Harriet Toby. Mr. Lindgren, lthough he seems to lack musicality, is a virile dancer f whom we shall certainly hear more, and Miss Toby proved herself in *Concerto Barocco* and *Les Sylphides*, and as Frankie in one of the final performances of *Frankie and Johnny* she brought new life to a role which was beginning to bore me.

So much for Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. A new hope for American Ballet came further to the forefront in the subscription performance, March 22nd, of Ballet Society. Here is a fine, eager, able and well-directed company that is giving more and more frequent performances and which will give some open performances next year. At present its performances are limited to season subscribers and will have totalled five by the end of the season. George Balanchine is artistic director, Leon Barzen is musical director and Lincoln Kirstein is secretary.

The first ballet presented was the première of Todd Bolender's *Capricorn Concerto*. Music was by Samuel Barber, with scenery and costumes by Esteban Frances salvaged from last season's *Zodiac*. Although the music was not particularly danceable and the sets bore little relationship to the ballet, there is something to be said for the work. Mr. Bolender's ballet, classic in form, is without plot. It is imitative of Balanchine but at least it is predicated on movement and so is at once superior to some of the tripe which has received more expensive production by our ballet companies in recent seasons. I think Bolender will grow as time goes on. The performance was good. Herbert Bliss,

formerly of Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and Francisco Moncion, formerly of the Marquis de Cuevas' late Ballet International, were very good indeed as the Sun and the Moon respectively. As for Maria Tallchief as Earth, she looks more like a ballerina every time I see her. Her clean technique, earnest, sincere representation and good projection are the best stock-in-trade a young dancer can have. Given the roles and the opportunity to appear frequently before the public, and a new ballerina will have been born.

The concluding ballet, *Symphony in C*, was by George Balanchine. Set to Bizet's music it was the first performance in America of the previously-entitled *Palais de Cristal* which Balanchine did for the Paris Opera last year. I should like to say that this is the finest thing done in years in American Ballet. I was thrilled, as was the audience, which expressed its approval in no uncertain terms.

The ballet, abstract in nature, is presented in four movements. Each movement features two soloists and four *petits sujets* as well as six or eight members of the *corps*. The whole ballet is climaxed by a finale which brings all fifty dancers on the stage. The soloists in the first movement were Maria Tallchief (excelling in a fantastically difficult solo) and Nicolas Magallanes. In the second movement Tanaquil Leclerq, a "find" of the company, and Francisco Moncion do a beautiful *adagio*, while in the third and fourth movements Beatrice Tompkins and Herbert Bliss, and Elise Reiman and Lew Christensen were the principals. Any minor criticisms would be merely carping. Mr. Balanchine, who set the ballet and rehearsed the dancers, can add a new triumph to his already impressive list.

RAM GOPAL

RAM GOPAL and his Indian Dancers returned to London on March 3rd for a season at the Saville Theatre which continued until April 3rd. His company has been slightly augmented and he now has a group of musicians on the stage. This adds immeasurably to the effect though the fiddle, albeit it is held in the manner of the folk fiddlers, seems strangely anachronistic—a modernism (for is not the violin only a few centuries old?) in the midst of an incredibly ancient culture.

Ram Gopal's magic is still potent. There is something almost hypnotic in the rippling of his arms from fingertip to shoulder, and some of the traditional mime has a delicate fun which our western ballet cannot reach. His explanations of some of the basic hand and arm movements, with the facial expression which goes with each, do much to illuminate his art for us, but when all is said we are still facing a mystery to the enchantment of which we succumb without being able to bring to it the knowledge which to a greater or lesser degree we all bring to the ballet which we understand. To make the obvious comparison that Indian ballet uses mainly the arms and hands and western ballet the legs and feet, and to draw from this the conclusion that each might with advantage learn from the other, is to reveal a complete lack of real understanding of either art.

It is therefore almost impossible to assess the true extent of Ram Gopal's talent though one senses it to be very great and used impeccably, and any criticism one may put forward must therefore be tentative and qualified. I begin to feel, though only after many visits, that Gopal has not yet developed a sense of narrative except within the necessarily severe limits of such solos as his superb Hunter's Dance. I remember how Uday Shankar's dances with his partner were complete small ballets. When Gopal dances with Shevanti (surely one of the most beautiful dancers in the world) his steps and hers are almost identical and there seems to be little progression. I say this in all humility, knowing the depths of my ignorance and realising that no criticism made by a westerner can have any certain value since it is not backed by knowledge.

That an evening watching Ram Gopal and his company is rich in enchantment and reward, thousands of Londoners have delightedly discovered. P.W.M.

Action photograph by Roger Wood

NEW BALLETS BY AUREL MILLOSS IN ITALY

By FERDINAND REYNA

NEVER had the Regent of the Bank of Italy intended that his two children, Lia and Ugo, should become dancers. However, at ten years of age both entered the ballet school of the Rome Opera House under the teacher, Guerra. Later they also worked with Gennaro Corbo, one of Cecchetti's last pupils. Six years of study, then entry into the *corps de ballet* under Boris Romanoff who was succeeded by Milloss. Lia and Ugo had their first parts in *La Boutique Fantasque* and their first leading roles in Alfredo Casella's *The Jar*.

For Ugo the war came as a tragedy. Away from the ballet for four years he expected on his return to find his career finished. But the ballet master, Corbo, took him in hand again while Milloss prepared him for far more complex roles. Ugo and Lia dell 'Ara said to me recently :—"Milloss is our father, our Prometheus, for, thanks to him, the problems of form and expression in rhythm no longer have terrors for us."

Without listing here all the roles performed by Ugo dell 'Ara, these few lines are necessary to establish his pedigree, studies and antecedents. Now, having seen him again in the new works by Milloss in Rome, he shows himself as a dancer of great style, with a superb line, astonishing *pirouettes* and an impeccable stage presence.

During the recent season Milloss presented three new ballets and one revival—*Le Galant Tireur* (music by Antonio Verretti, décor by Mario Pompei), inspired by a poem of Baudelaire. This consists of a suite of dances performed by the fantastic people of a fairground shooting gallery—the Red Indian, Columbine, the Sultan, and so on. Unfortunately the libretto hinders a little the imagination of the choreography as it fails to exploit to the full the fanciful resources of the subject.

In *Rhapsody in Blue* (a gay ballet to the well known music by George Gershwin), we have the ballerina, Attilia Radice (as the Negress) leading the dance which owes its inspiration to circus motifs. The movement of this burlesque *divertissement* grows more and more lively until it works up to a tumultuous finale.

A revival of *La Folie de Roland* (Petrassi-Casorati) confirms the opinion already expressed on this choreo-drama. Its several episodes are smoothly developed out of a sound choreographic plot which perfectly matches the nobility of the subject.

But Milloss's greatest success at the Rome Opera has been *Jeu de Cartes* presented in an entirely new way and one which seems to me to be a very characteristic expression of Milloss's aesthetic. Elio Foggiolti possesses an astounding elevation combined with strength and suppleness. His role of the Joker, as well as that of Astolphe in *La Folie de Roland*, reveals him as a dancer of quality. Attilia Radice as the Queen of Hearts makes the most of her turns and her balance, while Cornelia Krelis and Nerina Colombo are supple and light. The abstract décor of Guttoso for *Jeu de Cartes* stands out well in relief against that of Scialoja (*Rhapsody in Blue*), a young modern who is very typically Italian. Amongst other dancers who should be mentioned are Guido Lauri, Giulio Perugini and Walter Zappolini. It is interesting to note how, in this group of dancers in Rome, one can trace the now remote influence of Guerra, then that of Romanoff, which has prepared the medium with which Aurel Milloss has worked so well with a success to which the public has paid homage.

AUREL MILLOSS CONDUCTING A REHEARSAL

Photograph by Claudio Emmer

Photograph by Oscar-Savio

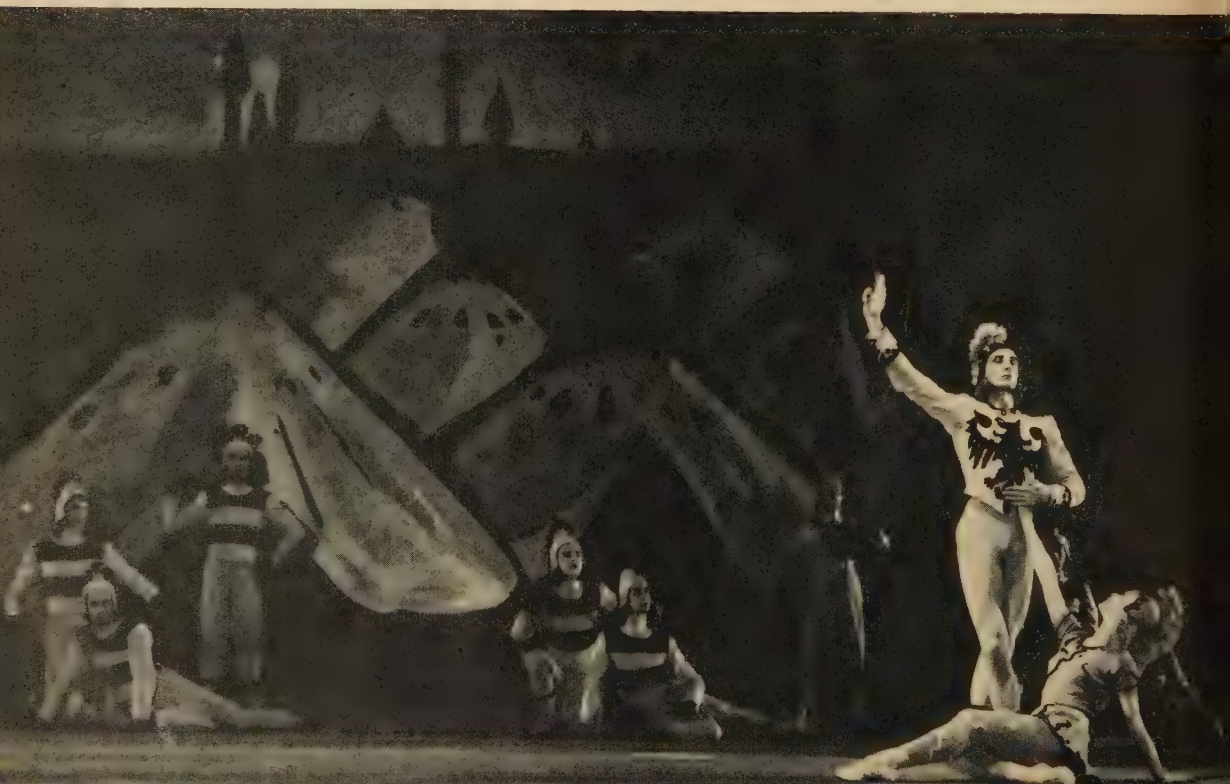
UGO DELL 'ARA IN "CASSE-NOISETTE"

Photograph by Oscar-Savio

ELIO FOGGIOLTI IN "JEU DE CARTES"

WANDA SCIACCALUGA AND UGO DELL 'ARA IN "LA FOLIE DE ROLAND"

Photograph by Claudio Emmer



Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

ANDRÉE HOWARD EXPLAINS WHAT SHE WANTS TO GERD LARSEN AND MICHAEL BAYSTON

FILMING "STEPS OF THE BALLET"

By ANDRÉE HOWARD

I HAVE just finished work on what I believe is the first instructional film on ballet to be made in this country. The film sets out to show how a ballet is created, giving an indication of how the composer, designer and choreographer work together to produce a ballet, and of course the part played by the dancers. The film is a short one running about twenty minutes. It has music specially composed by Arthur Benjamin and costumes and décor by Hugh Stevenson. It is directed by Muir Mathieson and produced by Alexander Shaw for the Crown Film Unit. They were responsible for "Instruments of the Orchestra", and "Steps of the Ballet" is as it were their second offspring.

It is intended for young audiences and in it we have tried to show simply and directly but without being academically boring how positions, movements, steps and then dances grow gradually together with the music and décor to form a ballet.

The film is divided into three parts ; the first shows positions, the hands, the rounded arms, the turned-out legs, the point work of a girl, the jumps and beats of a man, exercises at the bar and centre practice. Robert Helpmann gives the commentary throughout the film: at times he is seen in close-up speaking directly to the audience, at others his voice is heard explaining what is being shown on the screen.

In the second part the dancers are seen still in practice dress. Here the positions, movements and steps are formed into dances, first a solo danced by Gerd Larsen, then a *pas de deux* where she is partnered by Alexander Grant (they appeared by permission of the Covent Garden Opera Trust), then a *pas de trois* by Moyra Fraser, Jeanne Artois, and Lelia Russell and lastly a *pas de quatre* by Alexander Grant, Gordon Hamilton, Peter Wright and Michael Bayston. At first the dancers perform in front of a plain gauze cyclorama, then as the dances progress the scene for the final ballet is gradually built up round them and at the end of the men's *pas de quatre* the borders begin to be dropped in, a stage-hand sweeps the stage and there is the general feeling of bustle preparatory to the curtain going up on a ballet.

Then we come to the third part of the film, a ballet in costume and décor with full orchestra. Here the

same movements, steps, dances are developed to tell a story. This story is simple enough but serves to show the dances—solo, *pas de deux*, *pas de trois*, *pas de quatre* in the order in which they were first seen, ending in a finale with *corps de ballet*. To find a story simple yet involving one, two, three and then four characters in that order was no easy problem ; Hugh Stevenson and I had several cups of tea before we arrived at a solution. This is the story that evolved. A young girl is dancing (solo), she meets her betrothed (*pas de deux*). Three goddesses (*pas de trois*) to test her love dismiss the young man and present her with four suitors (*pas de quatre*). The first offers her the rose of poetry, the second a magic bird in a golden cage, the third a jewelled crown, but the fourth (who is her lover in disguise) offers her only a kiss. Having refused the first three suitors she now accepts the fourth knowing him to be her true love. The goddesses are satisfied with her choice and all ends in general rejoicing.

The shooting of the ballet was done at the Hackney Empire. No other theatre was available and the nightly variety programme was uninterrupted by the day's shooting. The work involved for the studio staff, electricians, engineers, etc., was tremendous. At midnight a large staff was busy building a rostrum for the camera track the full length of the stalls gangway, powerful lamps were set up, a false proscenium had to be built in front of the existing one and the scenery had to be set. This work took all night and by 8 o'clock in the morning everything was ready for a day's shooting. Every evening the paraphernalia was dismantled in two hours and the auditorium and stage ready for the evening's variety performance. The dressing-rooms were shared with the variety artists. Early one Monday morning I hurried up to the *corps de ballet* dressing-room with some urgent instruction and was somewhat amazed to find that I was greeted with growls and barks—a troupe of white poodles were in possession, taking a rest before the new bill for the evening show. Another time a member of the film staff was clearing a space in the wings : he picked up a box, and a large palm-tree shot up into his face to the accompaniment of a little peal of bells—that was the week the magician was appearing. But with all these difficulties and surprises

PREPARING THE SET FOR A "TAKE"

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

Action photograph by Duncan Melvin

GERD LARSEN AND ALEXANDER GRANT IN THE BALLET SCENE

he nine-minute ballet sequence was shot in five days. Then we moved to a large drill hall near Slough—ere all the first part of the film was made and a few e-takes of the ballet.

Arranging dances for a film is a very different natter from arranging for stage presentation. All the ime one has to see, as it were, through the square, ather cold eye of the camera. Movements which ave meaning in the round can look awkward and ugly when presented on the flat surface of the screen. The amera angles must be studied throughout ; it is ascinating work. For the dancers it is also extremely ard work, for a dance may have to be shot five or ix times before the producer, the director, the nembers of the sound department, the camera man, he camera operator, the choreographer, an endless tream of people concerned are all satisfied.

For rehearsals the floor is marked with a chalk, here cross to indicate the position for a *pirouette*, two feet rom this point another to show where the supporting oot must be placed for an *arabesque*, a *pas de bourrée jeté* nust be executed within a certain radius of this point nd so on—all this is to enable the camera man to set his lights. Several rehearsals are needed so that the lancers can memorise their positions on the floor and he camera operator can learn the various moves in the lance so that he can anticipate the movements and not be surprised at a leg or an arm suddenly extending out of the picture. Before a "take" the dancers' make-up, hair, shoes, tights, costumes, etc., are seen to, the floor is swept and all the chalk marks removed. It is then that the dancers have their hardest task to perform, for they must remember exactly where the chalk marks were, appear not to be thinking of the floor and give a performance, and as I have said this performance may have to be repeated many times and each time must appear fresh and spontaneous.

I hope I have not given the impression that all this hard work was in any way disagreeable. I think that to most of us concerned in the making of "Steps of the Ballet" the whole business was absorbing and fascinating. Everyone was amiable and efficient (or inspired).

I have seldom enjoyed working on anything more than making this ballet film, and I feel it is a privilege to have had the opportunity of collaborating with Alexander Shaw, Muir Mathieson, and so many other charming people.

Madame Volkova is holding auditions every Saturday at 3.15 p.m. at 26, West Street, London, W.C.2 for entry into her classes for children (both girls and boys) between the ages of 9 and 12 inclusive. In special cases applicants can qualify for scholarships covering a comprehensive training in ballet.

WHAT IS A CLASSICAL DANCER?

Leo Kersley and Janet Sinclair try to clarify a difficult subject

L.K.: Look at this review. It adds one more to your list of dancers who definitely are "not classical dancers."

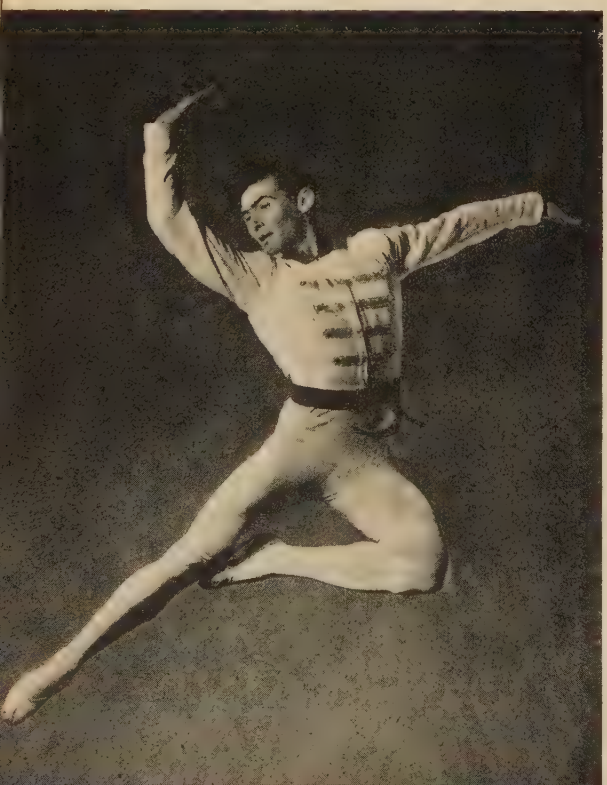
J.S.: Impossible; everybody who is anybody is there already. Anyway, what is a classical dancer? I don't remember ever hearing a recognised definition, though it is the most commonly used term in ballet today.

L.K.: I can't recollect a printed definition, but obviously a classical dancer is one who practises classical theatrical dancing as perfected by Noverre, Blasis, Cecchetti, Vaganova, etc., as against one who performs national, ballroom or barefoot dances.

J.S.: That seems a bit broad: can't you be more particular than that?

L.K.: No, because this term defines a special branch of dancing and as such is necessary. It is far more intelligent to use the word in this sense than to do as the people who describe all the old ballets as "classics" and then label the leading roles "classical" ones;

BALLON, VIRILITY AND ELEGANCE ARE COMBINED IN IGOR YOUSKEVITCH, SHOWN HERE IN "CASSE NOISETTI"



going on to assert that the ability to dance the Queen of the Wilis or Giselle automatically makes a dancer suitable for Swanilda, Odette, Aurora, Blue Bird, Columbine, Sylphides and the young Girl in *Spectre de la Rose:* which does not follow, because these roles are made for quite different types of dancers whose qualities are entirely different, and it is therefore impossible for any one dancer to excel in all of them. In any case, to lump all the old ballets together as "classical" contradicts the accepted use of the words "Romantic," "Narrative" and "Classical" in an inseparable artistic parallel.

J.S.: Where you talk of different types of dancer, do you mean Noverre's two physical types, and if so wouldn't you say that the loosely-knit type conforms to the popular definition of "a classical dancer" nowadays?

L.K.: Yes, I did mean Noverre's two types, into one of which all classical dancers fall: either they possess loosely-knit limbs and elegance or they are tightly knit and have great power and *ballon*. Certainly most people think of the loose-limbed dancers who excel as Odette or Aurora as the classical dancers, but they will find this category of dancer comparatively earthbound as the Queen of the Wilis or in the Mazurka of *Les Sylphides*, and conversely they will find that those girls who soar through the latter roles are found to have a tightness that does not allow them to display the easy high arabesques and similar movements expected of Odette.

Of course, these are only the two main divisions into which dancers fall: there are obviously deviations from the two extremes: but you can see why I get so impatient with people who say that as a certain dancer is not good in one classical part, she cannot be a classical dancer, when I know she performs other "classical" roles superbly.

J.S.: I think it must be admitted that there exists a boundless confusion in the mind of the ballet audience *en masse* as to the meaning of the word "classical."

L.K.: Actually, calling dancers "classical" or "unclassical" is an easy way of disguising thoughtlessness.

J.S.: Everyone has their own more or less muddled view of the thing and tries to fit the dancer into their readymade definition rather than fitting the definition to the dancer—anybody falling outside the popular conception yet, oddly, able to dance a classical role superlatively well is quietly overlooked and the term is thrown, usually in its negative sense, at the head of anybody one happens to dislike.

L.K.: Precisely: and instead of thinking out why e likes or dislikes a dancer in a given role one just ys "He is classical" or "He is not classical," i.e. good bad; and by saying dogmatically "not classical" stead of "bad" one avoids substantiating one's state- ent, let alone troubling to explain in unambiguous ords why one likes or dislikes a certain performance.

J.S.: For example, I should say that I like Honer d Nerina as the Sugar Plum Fairy—and also Baronova— cause their strong physique, sure feet and great utness of carriage leaves me free to enjoy their move- ent without thinking of the technique involved; d even leaving out this physical consideration, I ink I always prefer the actual smooth flowing quality that type of movement to any other.

L.K.: That is how I wish people—and particularly itics—would state their preferences, first because it lls me how the role was danced and secondly because I had only seen Honer I should then have a good idea Nerina's qualities, and vice versa. Incidentally, hile I also prefer the bouncy dancers who always keep e movement going, in this particular role I liked rgyle or Heaton better because the quality of their ne and more brittle movements seem more suited the diamond-like sparkle that the choreography and usic of the role demand.

If everyone stated preferences clearly in this way, it ould make ballet criticism on both sides of the curtain uch more illuminating and less dogmatically childish, d would help people to appreciate the qualities of very dancer instead of being blind to those of any but eir own particular idol. Also if roles were allotted ecause of the dancer's physical ability to dance them ell instead of because she is a "classical" dancer, we ould then never be in the incongruous position of eeing ballerinas with the line and sharpness for *Casse oisette* and Aurora being naturally expected to do the Queen of the Wilis and the *Les Sylphides* Mazurka, here their lack of *ballon* is almost sure to prove isappointing in comparison with the line that made eir Sugar Plum Fairy so breathtaking. Of course, is interesting occasionally to see a dancer physically nsuited to a role having a go at it, if she is mentally emarkably suited to its mood, but it is because so many dancers are given parts suited to their tempera- ment but not to their physique that ballet performances re often a doubtful pleasure to the ballet-goer, who as possibly already seen the role danced easily once r twice and many more times with unbecoming strain y dancers trying to do things to which they are aturally unsuited.

J.S.: So you think that dividing dancers into lassical, soubrette or what-have-you types often places he accent on their personality and not on their dancing nd that this is a bad thing?

L.K.: Yes.

J.S.: And this leads to type casting, which hampers the dancer and does not allow her to enlarge her scope?

L.K.: Not quite ; sometimes this classification limits dancers, but because of it others are often given roles of which they are incapable.

J.S.: A good example of that surely is *Les Patineurs*, which was made for Turner with his terrific jump and quick springy movement and which lost much of its sparkle and gaiety when it was performed by Alexis Rassine with his quite different type of movement.

L.K.: Precisely: because one is a star it does not necessarily mean that one is the most suited to every leading role. I feel strongly about this because I am convinced that if ballet is to be considered seriously as an art it is the movements that must provide the characterisation, and not the makeup and personality: so if parts were intentionally cast for one type of dancer and then always replaced by that type, we should be sure of the movements telling as much and in the same way—although of course everyone would give a role their own twist, just as different heroic tenors give a different inflection to their own interpretation of Tristan or Siegfried; but no sane lyric tenor would attempt either role.

JEAN BABILÉE, REMARKABLE FOR HIS POWER AND BALLON, IS HERE SEEN AS THE BLUE BIRD

Photograph by Edward Mandinian

Action photograph by Edward Mandinian

THE PAS DE TROIS FROM "LAC DES CYGNES" DISPLAYS THE ELEGANCE AND EXTENDED LINE OF ALEXIS RASSINE

J.S.: You mean that to cast a dancer without good elevation to dance the Queen of the Wilis should be as incongruous and unthinkable as to cast the Isolde type of dramatic soprano for the coloratura Queen of Night?

L.K.: Yes. Incidentally, a role is usually created for a dancer who has the closest mental affinity to it, and so when it is taken over by another of the same personality but different technique those movements no longer mean what they did originally: for instance, Pauline Clayden in *Nocturne*, whose personality is right but whose movements have not the softness and lyrical quality of Fonteyn's, on which Ashton relied for much of his characterisation.

J.S.: But if dancers were always cast because they were ideal physically in a role, wouldn't it make the performances monotonous and dull? I feel that there is already too much danger of dancers appearing as like as peas in a pod and I feel that it was tremendously exciting, say, to see anyone like Helpmann having a go at *Les Patineurs* and to see how cleverly he got away with something that was not his part. Surely it is possible to learn a tremendous amount from this type of performance?

L.K.: I think that to cast dancers primarily because they were physically suited to a role would be the reverse of dull, because the spectator would then always see the dancer at ease and able to concentrate on her interpretation instead of battling with the steps, so more variety and pleasure would be obtained—and happier dancers! Of course it is interesting, as you suggest, to see an artist of Helpmann's genius once in any role, but I doubt whether one would have continued to enjoy his entertaining performance in *Les Patineurs* after a few repetitions, when one had become accustomed to his witty presentation. However, while it is interesting to see one brilliant person physically miscast in a ballet, when many of the cast are ill at ease we get a very faded reflection of the choreographer's original values, as the balance is destroyed, just as Debussy's *L'Apres-Midi d'un Faune* loses much of its effect performed on two pianos, and as does Van Gogh's *Cornfield* reproduced in black and white.

J.S.: It seems more and more obvious that if dancers were classified more accurately, ballets would not fall off with changes of cast, and if the audience were encouraged to distinguish dancers in this way themselves they would be able to appreciate the qualities of all types of dancer and not exclusively the particular type that happens to appeal to them. And that seems to be all.

But fancy discussing "classical" dancers without mentioning Danilova, who can dance all of these roles superbly!

L.K.: She can, and I'm sure no-one would doubt that she was a "classical" ballerina despite her vast range in every other kind of part and she seems at home in all of them. This would seem to disprove my theories, but there are four reasons for her exceptional versatility. First, she possesses a particularly lovely figure that is just supple enough for her to assume the cool relaxed lines of the elegant type of dancer, yet secondly she is strong enough to bounce and jump quite high: thirdly, she was lucky enough to be a pupil of the Russian schools for many years before appearing on the stage, and fourthly she has outstanding intelligence, which tells her how to use whichever of her gifts are most appropriate to the role in hand. However, when you compare her performance with Riabouchinska's high floating Mazurka in *Les Sylphides* and with the elegance of Fonteyn's Odette you realise that in these roles it was a matter of superlative technique and artistry on her part which made her remarkable, as against the other dancers' natural abilities, whereas in *Firebird* where both elegance and elevation are essential, I have yet to see anyone half as good, as she alone possesses both qualities equally.

J.S.: Then as it is my prerogative to have the last word, let's agree with the exception of Danilova never to speak of a "classical" dancer again.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

OHN CRANKO'S *Children's Corner* to Debussy's famous suite is the latest addition to the repertoire the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, its first night being April 6th. This little work has already been seen wo R.A.D. Production Club matinées, when it had a more agreeable décor, the present one being both sy and ugly. It is an unimportant ballet which is ikely to earn permanency, though as the work of a enty-year-old newcomer it was well worth putting Nothing of any interest happens until half way ough but from then on it is consistently pleasant if exciting. What does matter (and this *is* important) hat John Cranko has made this ballet his own ; it is n-derivative and unpretentious, and what it has to say, ough that is little enough, is said in his own way. even manages to present freshly that most hackneyed all ballet characters, the doll. And the Golliwog's efinger extended for the monkey to hold and later to ich the arm of the doll, is a charming and somehow ving little piece of invention. In *Tritsch-Tratsch*, that rty bit of knockabout which rightly belongs in a revue, anko showed a remarkably keen sense of action ed to music. This sense is just as acute with the icate rhythms of Debussy, which is an additional

SHORE AND DAVID POOLE IN "CHILDREN'S CORNER"
graph by Ian Gibson-Smith

reason to believe that his present promise will in due course find its fulfilment.

A few weeks ago the management of Sadler's Wells Theatre were kind enough to allow me to attend one of their ballet matinées for L.C.C. schoolchildren. It was a most exhilarating afternoon ; ages ranged from about eleven to fifteen and the children behaved beautifully. There was a terrific babel and a great consumption of edibles in each interval, but at the end, after the auditorium had been emptied in about five minutes, there was not a crumb nor a paper bag to be seen. I carefully noted reactions and came to the following conclusions:— On the strength of Pierrot's entrance the children decided that *Carnaval* was a comic ballet and behaved accordingly. (I feel that most adult audiences take the same view nowadays and are always disappointed that it is not so amusing as they expect it to be). The *pas de trois* from *Swan Lake* did not appeal as much as might have been expected : they seemed to find the classical tutus with the revealing length of leg rather amusing. Contrary to what seems to be the usual opinion, I have never found that children are particularly interested in purely classical dancing. I have seen them over and over again at Covent Garden manifestly bored and fidgety during *The Sleeping Beauty* except when Carabosse is indulging in her wickedness or the Cats and Red Riding Hood are going through their paces, though they have obviously been taken because "it is just the thing for the kiddies". On the other hand on this particular afternoon they were surprisingly responsive to *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales* which one might have supposed to be above their heads, and of course they raised the roof at *Tritsch-Tratsch*. However, the loudest cheers of all were for *Les Rendezvous* which also got gasps of admiration on the entries of the girls. I noticed that most of the children seemed to think "lifts" were a great joke, particularly if the girl was held in the air for any appreciable length of time ; possibly Freud has a word for it. What I liked about this audience was that they had such decided views about applause. Their favourite ballets were hailed with deafening claps and cheers for perhaps three curtains, then they all quite simultaneously decided that that was quite enough and shut up completely. There have been half-a-dozen of these matinées during the winter season and sixty schools have sent representative batches of children. I am certain that this is the way to make an intelligent new generation of ballet-goers, and should like to see a development of the scheme which would make possible a weekly matinée so that many more thousands of children could participate and see ballet in this way perhaps once a term.

P.W.M.

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YOMA SASBURGH IN "LA BUVEUSE D'ABSINTHE"
Photograph by Angus McBean

Two New Ballets (continued from page 8)

and intrinsically lovely, ending with a sharp stab of heartbreak and resignation, inexplicable in words as the content of *Les Sylphides*, yet clear to sight and sound and deeply moving.

Its six interpreters, two men and four girls, can make it anything—or nothing. Its demands on them are immense, calling for beautiful bodies, brilliant technique, precision, fluidity of line and outstanding personality. One dancer, Peggy Sager, achieves nearly all but fluidity, two fulfil the task completely. Svetlana Beriosova's long-lined pliancy, ending in a moment of heart-catching poignancy as, separated from her partner, the sorrow of youth engulfs her, and Sonia Arova's dark fire, her movements so brilliant, controlled, yet exquisitely flowing, her wordless sympathy extending from one who has emerged triumphant from the ordeal of sorrow to one just entering it, together lift the ballet from one of beautiful design to one of profound experience.

Yoma Sasburgh

Miss Yoma Sasburgh gave two dance recitals at the Rudolph Steiner Hall on March 11th and 12th. Miss Sasburgh was born in Amsterdam, trained with Ruth Tobi and later at the Jooss-Leeder School at Dartington Hall. Many readers will remember her as a leading member of the Ballets Jooss in 1944 and 1945.

Within the severely prescribed limits of the dance idiom she has chosen, Miss Sasburgh's technique is beautifully finished and displayed but, as invariably happens with the "free" dancer no matter what the "school," after about three dances she has nothing more to show. After that it is a question of holding the audience by the force of personality and the intrinsic interest of the ideas which inspire the dances. Yoma Sasburgh does not always manage to achieve this. Her personality is a charming one, unassuming and friendly—like Ellen Terry she looks a great dear—and because of this she does not convince when she attempts demoniacism as in *Lucifer* or debauchery as in *La Buveuse d'Absinthe*, though her appearance on her entry in the latter is startlingly like the Felicien Rops engraving which inspired it. Also there are certain kinds of dances which *must* make their effect through sheer technical virtuosity which is why her *Polichinelle*, a clever conception, is not completely successful. But in her lighter moods, as in *Entrée*, *Folk Song* and *Allegresse*, (this last to one of the movements of Milhaud's *Scaramouche*), she is wholly delightful, and though not always quite sensitive enough to rhythms she is always responsive to the moods of the music.

P.W.M.

FOR PUBLICATION IN JUNE

★

Arabesques

Some Studies of the Ballet

by

Alan Storey

12/6 net

Illustrated with line drawings by HUGH STEVENSON and 8 pp. of photographs

Alan Storey, who is well known to readers of *Ballet Today*, has written this provocative and penetrating analysis of the backgrounds to Ballet from the time of Lulli to Robert Helpmann and the present day. The chapters on the Masque, Noverre's life and letters, and, in particular, the impact of Romanticism on the ballet, are perhaps, the most comprehensive of their kind. Certainly, the final studies of Massine, Jooss, Helpmann and Tudor will do much to establish new standards of ballet criticism.

★

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